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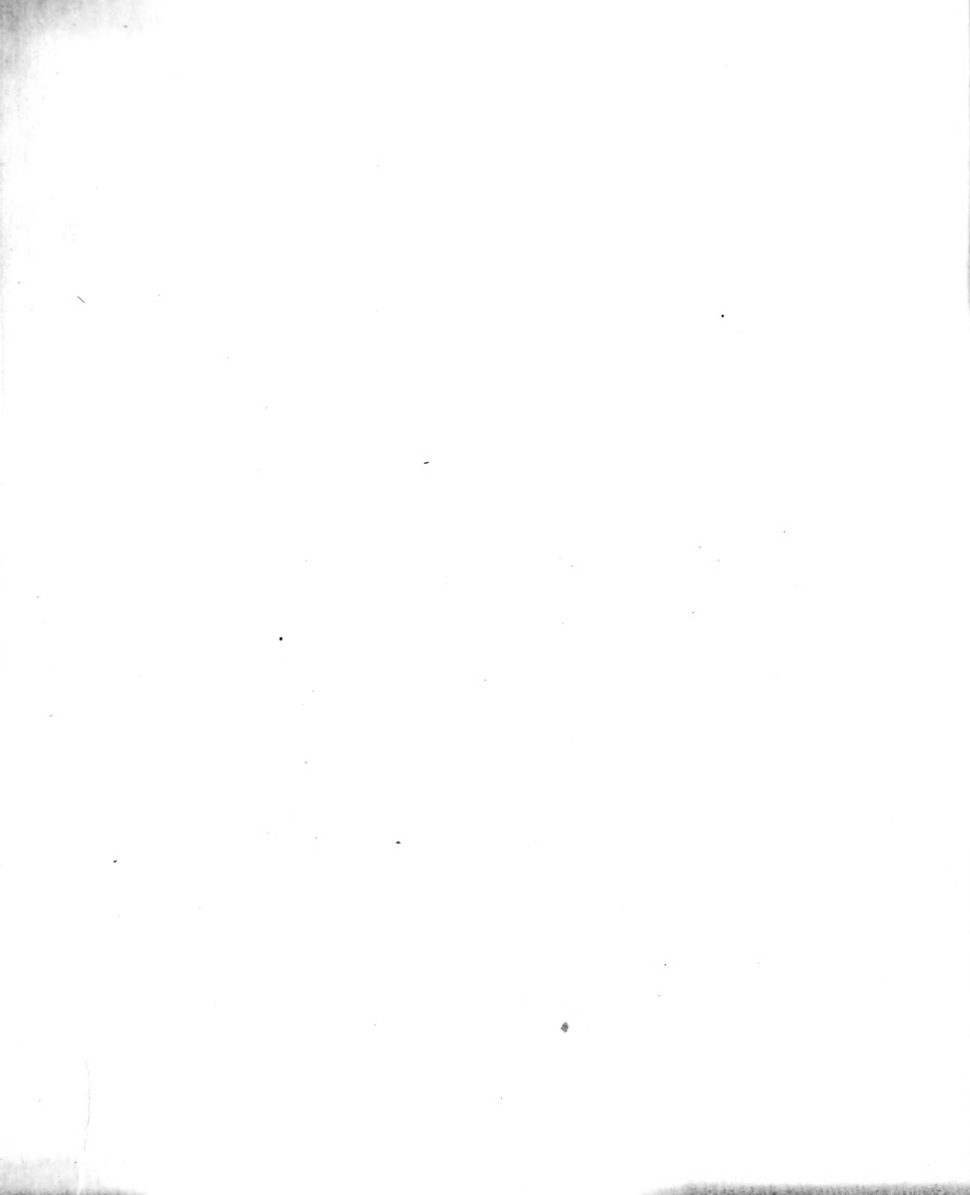
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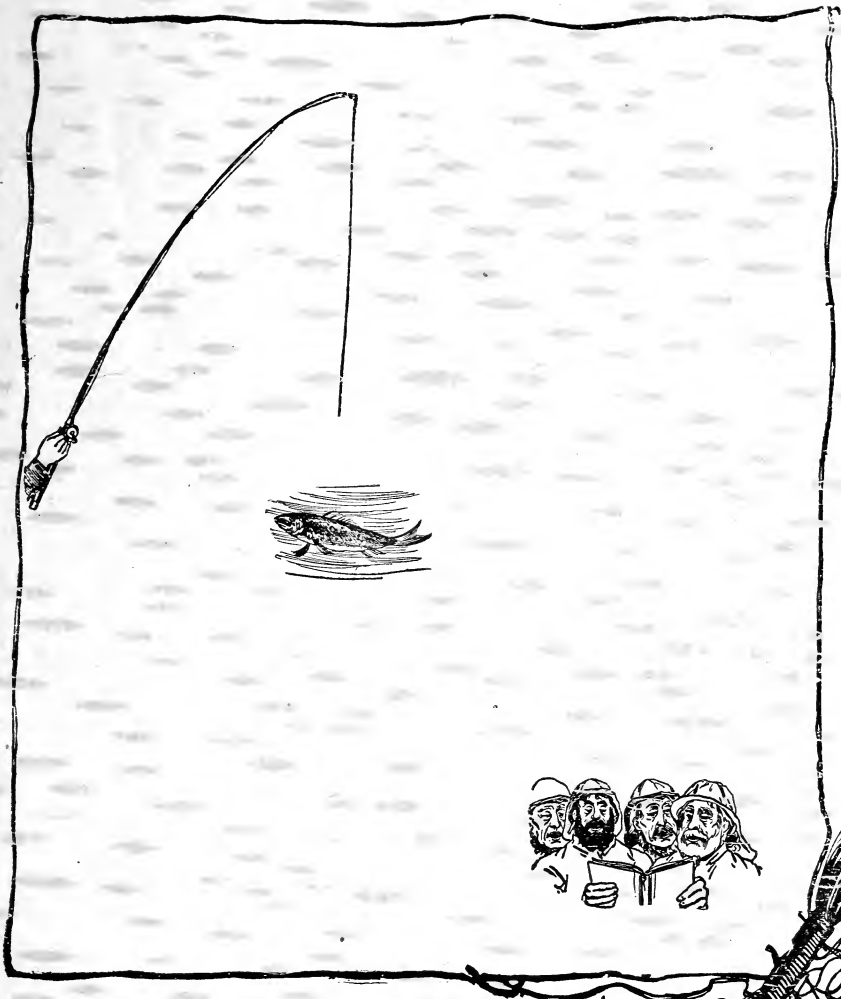
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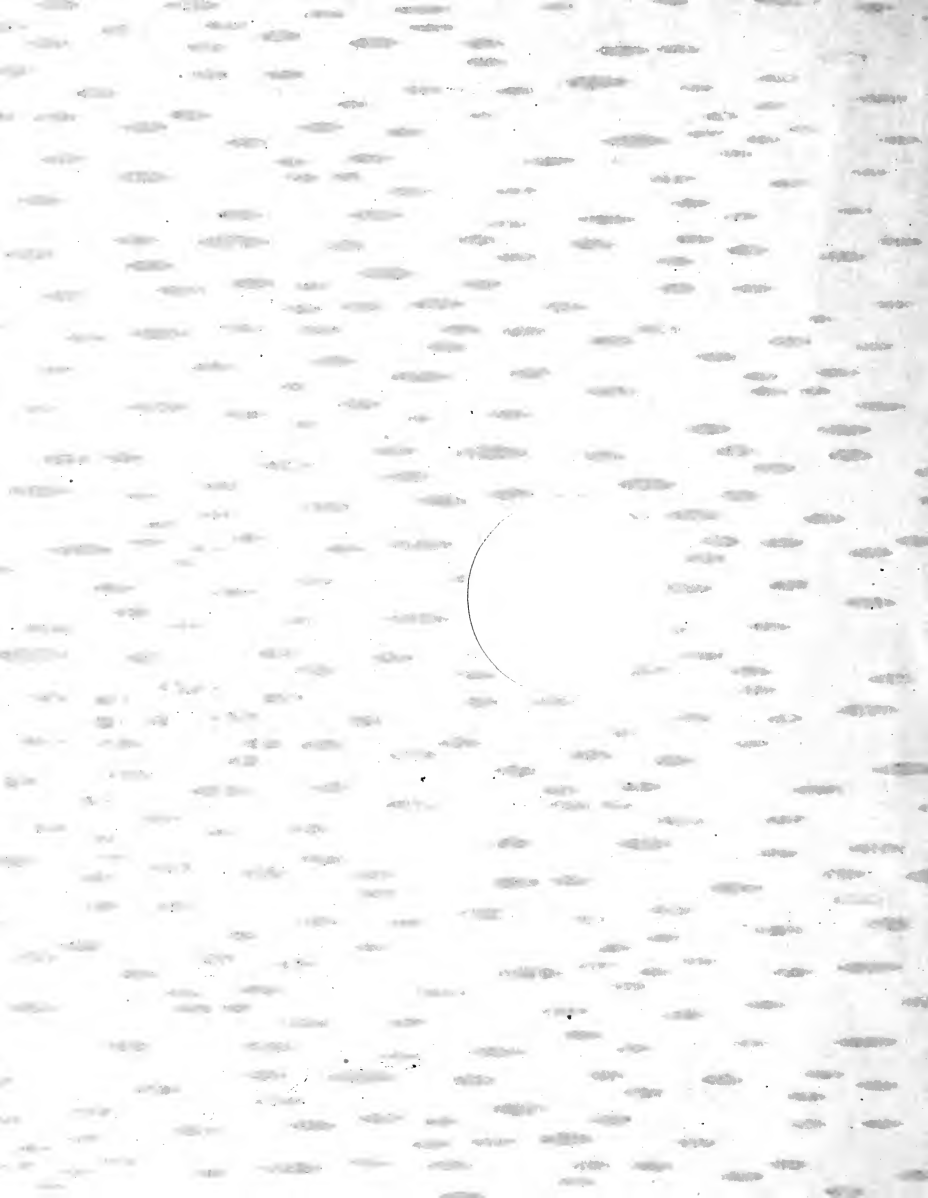
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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.









Fishers of Men.

BY
J. A. RICHARDS



*“ Without a Parable
Spake He not unto Them.”*

FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY

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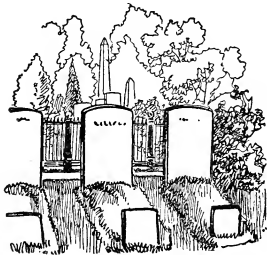
“Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.”—
Matt. 4-9.

“Follow me.”

Aye, but there are lots of people who can't follow Christ. They haven't the “beautiful feet”
 spoken of in Isaiah. Still there's no trouble with them physically. The difficulty is, that they are dead in trespasses and sins. This command is not spoken to dead people.

Are You Alive?

Have you died with Him and have you been raised again, and are you “walking in Him who is your head, even Christ?” In brief, are you a Christ Christian? Dead people can't follow nor fish.



Are you Well?

Some Christians are sick-a-bed. They have allowed the self-life to starve the Christ-life till they're bed-ridden and have been so for years. Sick men can neither follow nor fish.



No, No!

The Lord doesn't call you to follow and fish, you half-alive, sick-a-bed Christian. What lots of you there are! What a mistake is often made in trying to set you to work. Better try to get you well. Take Christ as a tonic, legion friend, till you are able to stand and walk in Him. Then there will be some chance of following and fishing.

Well People, “Follow Me.”

We’ve sifted our readers by this time as Gideon did his band.

said Christ,
secret of all

If we would
two words



“Follow me,”
and here is the
successful fishing.

simply take these
and begin to

attach all the importance to them that there is in them there were no need to write another word. But, because we’re human as well as divine, the Lord has to be explicit, for he not only says “follow me,” but he says “And I will make you fishers of Men.”

And where He is explicit we may well be.

Repetition for Emphasis.

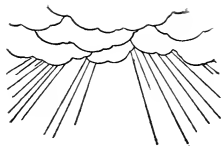
The call of Peter and John is repeated in almost exact words by Matthew, Mark and Luke.

Matt. 4-9. Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.

Mark 1-17. Come ye after me and I will make you to become fishers of men.

Luke 5-10. From henceforth thou shalt catch men.

Inasmuch as these men were disciples, they are types of all disciples, and the call thus thrice repeated is to all Christ's alive and well Christians.



Following Leads to Filling.

It was three years and more after Peter began to follow Christ before he was filled with the Spirit.

It needn't be so long with us. "Received ye the Holy Spirit when ye believed?" If not, you must have Him before you can do any fishing.

Filled fishermen are the effective fishermen.

The Master Fisherman and Guide.

The Holy Spirit is the chief fisherman. His business in this dispensation is to gather out of the world a Church for Christ. He knows the haunts and habits of the fish. His guidance and his skill are indispensable to successful fishing.

To go before he sends is fruitless, but the desire to fish is implanted by him.

Dress Accordingly.

A fisherman doesn't dress for a ball. A jewelled hand or a showy attire may attract the fish from God to you. But every fisherman knows that it's his business to keep himself out of sight.

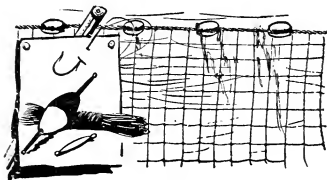


lousy Days.

The necessity for hiding self often renders a cloudy day the best time for fishing. Days when the Lord has hid himself behind some cloud of sorrow, either from you or the soul sought. At such times you are shut up to naked faith for a knowledge of God and his love, or the soul fished for realizing that he stands alone, stripped of earthly props, is therefore shut up to God.

These are days for a great catch.

The Tackle.



line.

It depends on how you are called on to fish, whether you shall use a net or a hook and

Peter at Pentecost was a net fisherman. Philip fished for the Ethiopian with a hook and line. The latter is at once the most important and most neglected method of fishing, so the following pages will be devoted to hook and line fishing.



The Line.

Prayer. "Long?" No, it needn't be so long as the ordinary fishing line, and you need to use a different one for every fish.

"Strong?" Yes, there's no line so strong as prayer.

Be sure your line was made by the Spirit, however, for if he indite not the prayer, it will break with the first using.

God is where the Fish are.

Does it strike you as strange that a line is used as an emblem of prayer, because the fishing line goes down into the dark, murky waters, whereas your conception of prayer has always been that it goes up? Well, when you're fishing always remember that God's where the fish are, and the direction for prayer is to seek Him among the fish.



Hook.

Faith barbed with truth. Your faith in Christ as your Saviour; yes, and as the Saviour of the soul for whom you're fishing. The size of your hook doesn't matter so much as the quality of it. Strong faith is a requisite.

Did you ever stop to think how big a fish may be caught on how small a hook?

The Barb. Truth. God's Truth. It hurts the flesh where it hooks, but the hurt is wholesome. The fish may struggle, but as long as he holds the hook, the hook will hold him.

Sinker.

You are fishing in deep pools of selfishness and sin, or rather selfishness which is sin. The word of your testimony brings your prayer and your faith down to where the fish are. Christ has ordained that all his saving power shall be brought nigh by your testimony.



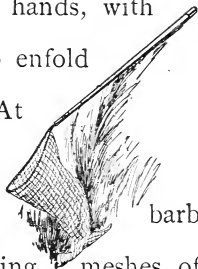
Float.

Oft times you can't see, through the muddy water of this world, whether the fish are biting or not. A float in the shape of inspired common sense will tell you and will also keep your hook off the bottom and out of the mud. Inspired common sense, mind you; not your own ordinary common sense, for the wise man said: "Lean not to thine own understanding."



The Landing Net.

Divine grace, placed in your hands, with which, at the proper time, to enfold the then submissive fish. “At the proper time.” Ah, yes; truth first, then grace; the barb of the hook before the loving meshes of the landing net. But both the one and the other are evidences of God’s great love.



Box of Live Bait.

The Bible. No irreverence, not the least.

Are there not passages of the blessed word



with which we may bait our hooks to attract any kind of fish that ever swam

this world wide sea? Such passages,

every one, are quivering with the life and

power of Christ. Wisdom is needed to adapt

the bait to the fish, sure enough. We must

study the bait box and study the fish, under

the tuition of the Master fisherman, the Holy

Spirit.

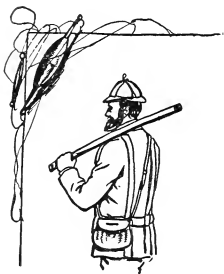
Digging Bait.

“Search the Scriptures * * * they are they which testify of me,” said Christ. “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth,” said Paul to Timothy.

Dig, pick up and stow away for the immediate future use, the precious things of God. The word is a great big fertile farm. Some specially rich spots to be sure, but good digging anywhere. But the good things are only to be had for the digging.



And now that the Tackle is all Together



let's look at it a moment. These five things the fisherman tries to conceal. Himself, the hook, line, float and sinker.

There's just one thing that he tries to make the fish see, and that's the bait. Significant facts for the Christian fisherman. Everything that we are in any way connected with should be as much concealed as possible. The word of God is the one thing to be made prominent, to allure the hungry soul of the sinner fish.

“Where’s my Tackle?”

Haven’t you heard such a cry come down from the garret, from the lips of the man or the boy of the house to his mother or wife? “I haven’t fished since last spring.”



There are lots of Christians who seem to think that there are seasons for soul fishing as distinct as those that the law fixes for piscatorial sport. They only fish during a revival.

No wonder their hooks get rusty and their lines are snarled when they find them tucked away in some corner. Such people generally find their bait stale and dead, just as the Israelites found their manna spoiled if kept over from one day to another.

Go where the fish are.

Yes, that's the next thing, but almost too self-evident to be mentioned. So one would think. But most Christians are doing almost any thing else; expecting sinner fish to come to the church to be caught. But pshaw! such are not fishermen, after all; they're these sick-a-bed, half-alive Christians. The true fisherman knows where to go and goes.



Sacrificial Fishing.

If the Good Shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep, the good fisherman may lay down his life for the fish. His convenience, of course, his pleasure, certainly, nay more, his very life, for the fish. Nothing wins so surely as sacrificial fishing.

A Mountain Stream.

Over rocks and fallen trees, through thickets
and morasses the true fisherman follows with
eager delight the course of a mountain stream,
which has not been fished
this season. How eagerly the
fish bite! What cares he
for the difficulties which be-
set the way. He is filling his
basket.



This is a parable of the Christian fisherman
in many a mission field. Why waste sympathy
on him? “Hardships?” He knows them
not; he’s catching fish for his Master.

Through the Ice.

The Lord be gracious unto the soul that's fishing in a gospel-hardened community. He's fishing through the ice. Everything and almost everybody is frozen up. He's misunderstood at every point, even if he stirs around in prayer meeting in order to keep warm. There are plenty of fish, but the ice is *so* thick, and the fish are *so* sluggish. Here are difficulties worse than the mountain stream, but the Holy Spirit can warm such a fisherman and keep him at his task, undiscouraged by the small catch.

Bait your Hook, and Don't be all Day About it.

Haven't you, over and over again, seen Christians in the enquiry rooms and at the altar, at a loss for the word, fumbling the leaves of their Bible in search for something they know is there, but which they cannot, for the life of them, locate? The sinner fish observes this awkwardness and makes up his mind that you don't understand your business. You ought to be able to turn readily to the passage the Lord suggests.

Don't neglect the fish, though, if you have but one bit of bait.



Throw Your Line Skilfully.

Don't get your tackle fouled in the branches
of overhanging trees. It isn't
skilful fishing to begin talk-
ing theology or church.
That's fouling your line.

Christ is your salva-
tion. Christ is your theme.
It doesn't follow that you
must be abrupt, though ; fish
are shy.



Hook and Line Fishing is quiet Business,

one at a time business, but business indeed, blessed, blessed business. The Church at large is not likely to hear much of you. You may never be a deacon, elder or other official, but Christ's business is the grandest work in the world. There are thousands of bed-ridden Christians who will bustle about (true, paradox though it be), and make the Church hear of their distinguished services, but you keep right on fishing, waiting for the recompense of reward.



Ah! There's a Bite.



Careful now, more skill than energy. Let him get a firm hold of your hook, then confident steady pulling in on the line. You are drawing the fish in toward the Christ in you, your Saviour until He shall become his Saviour too.

You are reeling in your own prayer and faith with the answer on the end of it. Remember that Christ said, "Ye shall catch men."

Don't get nervous! Let the Lord keep you calm and still, although very much interested. Nervousness is contagious and the fish may feel it.

Is He Gamey?

Argumentative?
let him tire him-
self in the argument.

strife about words to
as he has the bait
it's only a question of

Give him hook and line

(Faith and Prayer) in plenty, and reel

ever he stops struggling. No

he struggles, the hook hurts his

nature, but at the end of every

gle the flesh is weaker.



The best way is to
self out. Don't join

It would be but a

no purpose. As long

and is well hooked,

a little time.

(Faith and

in when-

wonder

fleshly

strug-

Now quickly, dexterously, use your landing
net of Divine grace.

Landed.

Praise God, yes, praise Him! No credit to the tackle as far as it was human, or to yourself in any way. But did you ever see the eye of a true fisherman shine as he landed a famously large and powerful fish? What a keenness of pleasure!

Who can tell of the joy of soul winning! Who can describe the waves of heavenly pleasure that surge over the soul as you see him for whom you have been fishing, possibly for months or years, for the first time breathing the breath of life, a fish no longer but a new creature in a new realm. It almost seems as if you could hear the joyous songs the angels sing over the one sinner that repenteth.





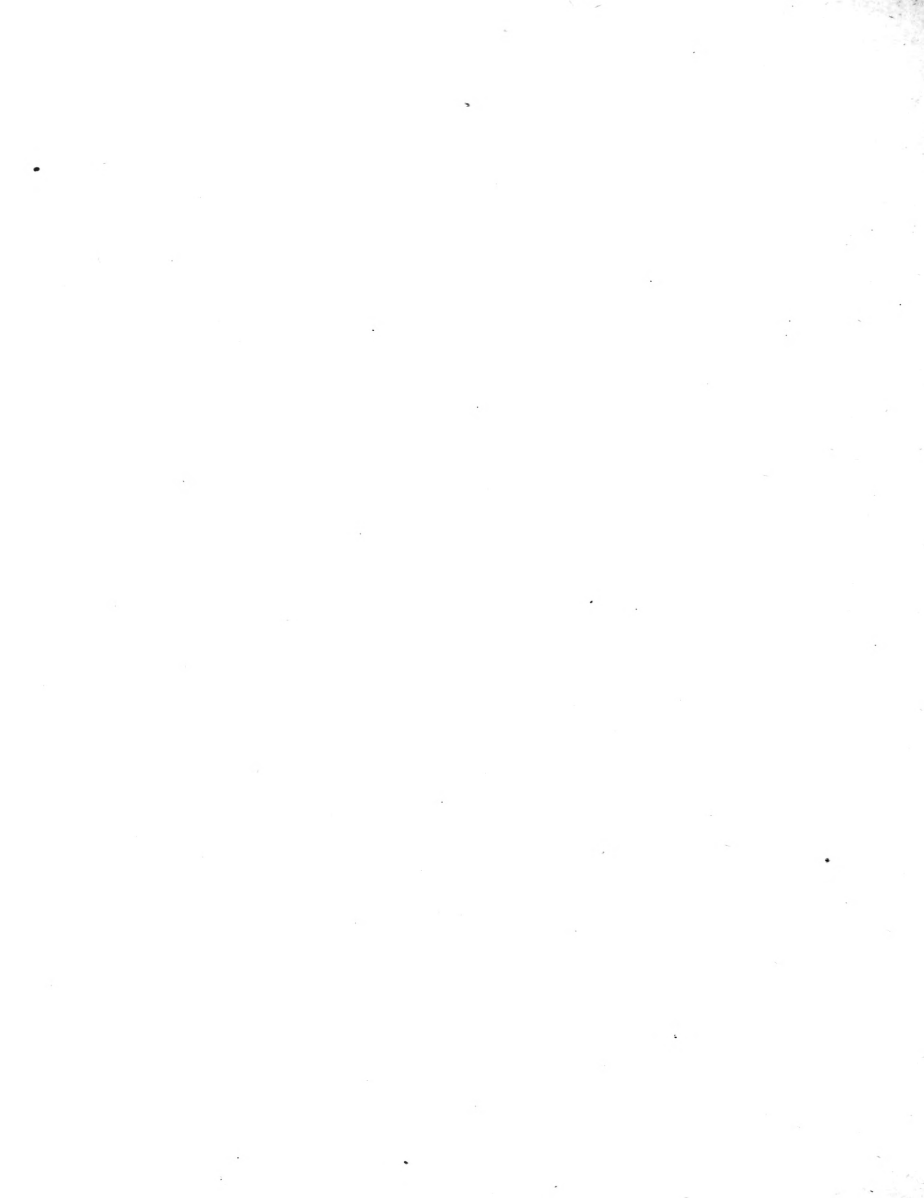
Discouraged Fisherman,

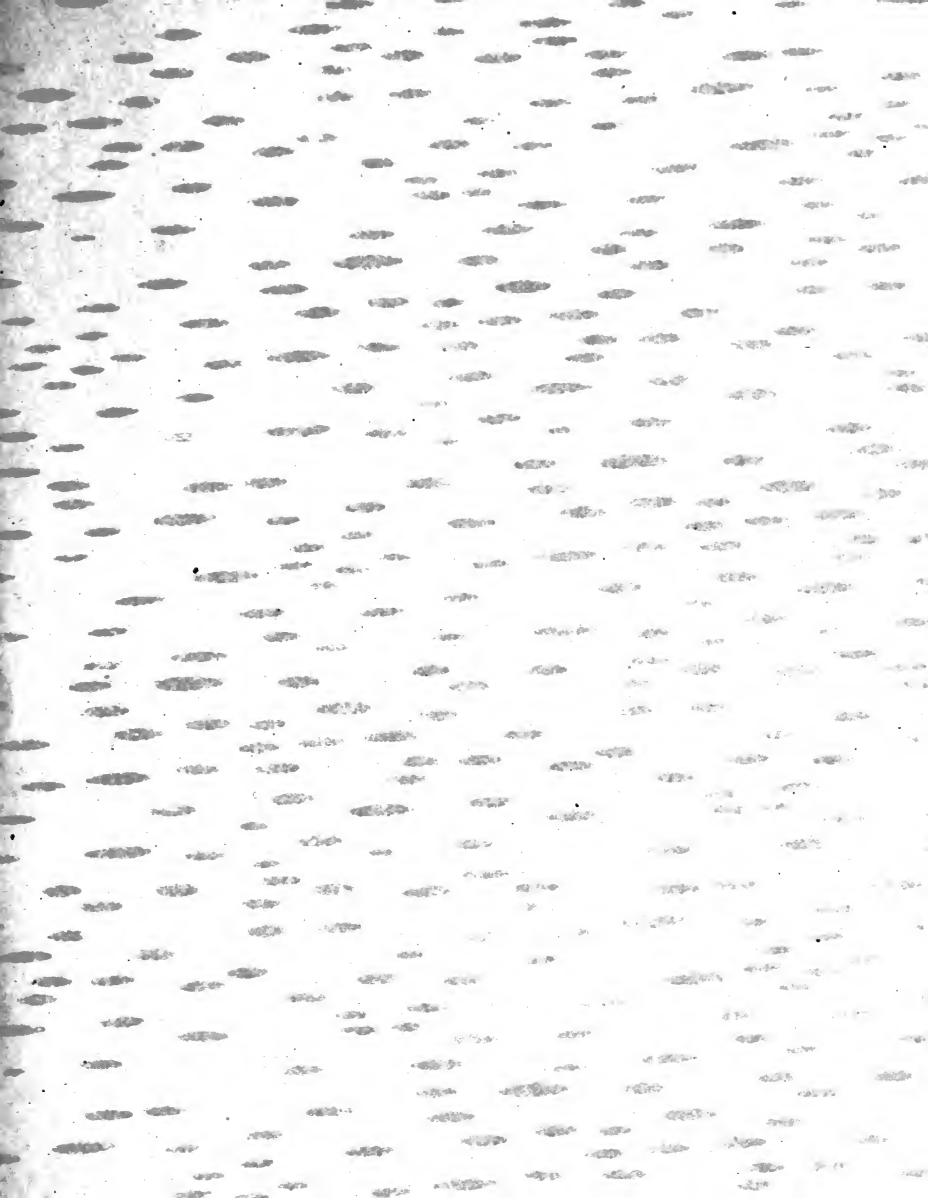
a word for you. God does not judge the faithfulness of the fishing by the size of the catch, but by the number of times you have skilfully cast your baited hook before the fish. This is a reckoning only He can make, and it may be He will say, Well done, good and faithful fisherman, you have been faithful over a few things.

**“Lord, If I May
I’ll Fish Another Day.”**

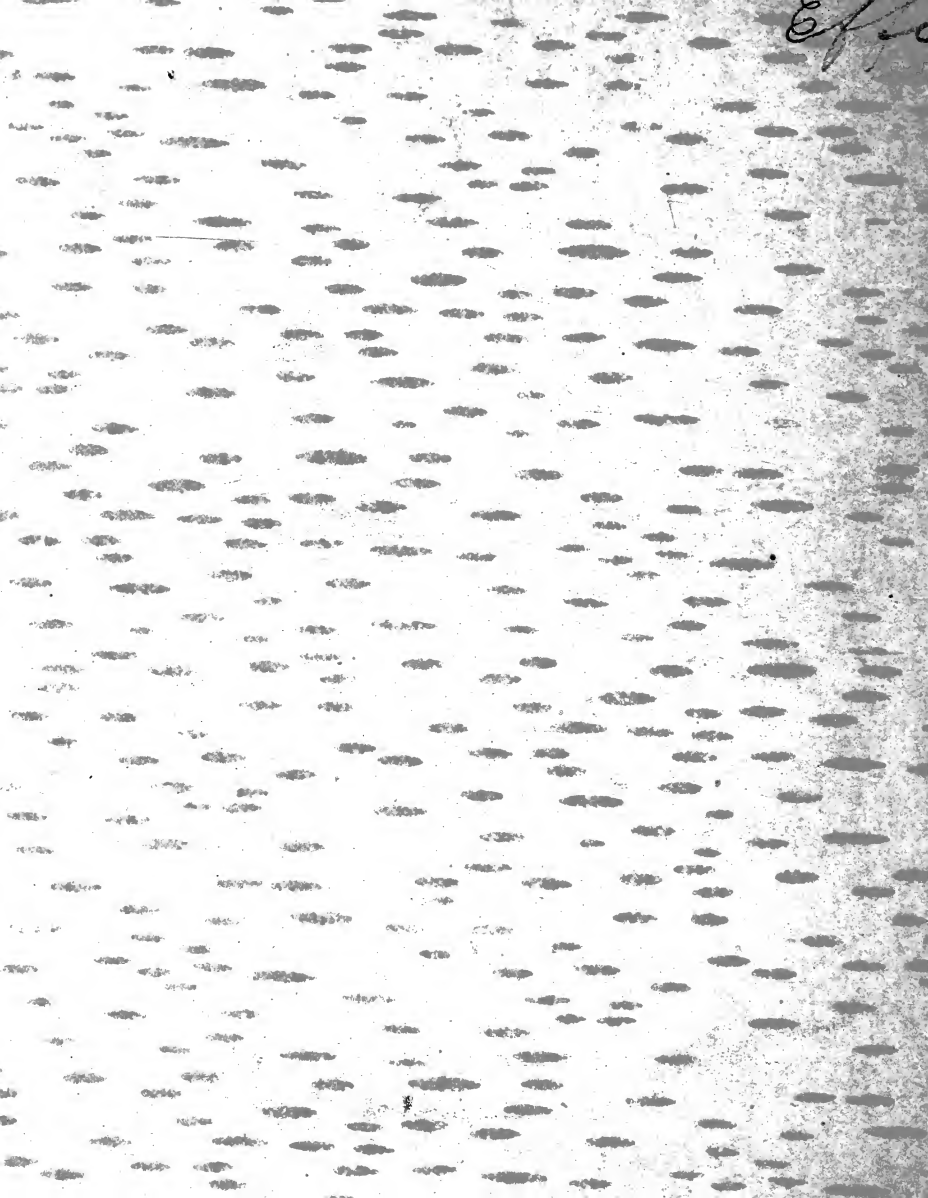


Let us all Sing the Chorus,
“One More Day’s Work,” etc.





E. J. ...







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